



MAYA ANGELOU ACADEMY AT NEW BEGINNINGS

ABOUT US

The Maya Angelou Academy is the school at New Beginnings (formally, Oak Hill) Youth Center, the District's secure facility for youth who have been adjudicated delinquent and committed to the [Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services](#) (DYRS). See Forever assumed management of the Maya Angelou Academy in June of 2007, bringing with it the same positive culture and high expectations that make our Maya Angelou Public Charter Schools so successful.

See Forever's mission at the The Maya Angelou Academy is to provide a safe, nurturing, and mutually respectful environment that motivates and prepares each student to fulfill his academic or career potential. With the support of a wide circle of caring adults, students will develop the skills they need to make sound decisions and lead rewarding lives.

Our History

Although our new school at the Maya Angelou Academy just opened last year (in June 2007), See Forever's work here really began 11 years ago. In 1997, two young lawyers saw that kids leaving D.C.'s juvenile detention facility had no good programs to help them get on track. Those lawyers, James Forman, Jr. and David Domenici, left their jobs to give a few young people what they needed: job training, a salary, and tutoring to help them in school. They subsequently founded the See Forever Foundation and the Maya Angelou Public Charter School.

Now that the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services has asked See Forever to run the school inside the New Beginnings Youth Center itself, our work has come full circle, and we have the chance to reach more of the young people who need help reconnecting to school, work, and their own futures.

During the eleven years See Forever has spent building successful alternative educational programs for young people who have been court-involved, truant, or unsuccessful in traditional schools, it has become clear what works: respectful, loving guidance and support from adults who really care, a relevant, challenging, and multifaceted academic program, employment and personal development training and opportunities, and empowerment of the young people as agents of change for themselves and, ultimately, their communities. The Maya schools have been very successful. This past year, 93% of the graduates from MAPCS campuses were accepted into 4-year or 2-year colleges and universities. Research shows that they are outperforming their peers. Over 70% go on to college or postsecondary school (compared to less than 40% of students graduating from DCPS). And once they enter postsecondary school: twice as many of them earn bachelor's degrees than other low-income, African American high school graduates nationally.



LEARNING AT THE ACADEMY

Students at the Maya Angelou Academy vary widely—by age, grade, skill level, interests, needs, and learning styles. Our job is to make learning relevant and interesting for these young men. To do so, with our scholars' input, we build an individualized learning plan that includes assessment and interest information for each student. Then, each scholar sets academic, career, and behavioral goals with his advocate and core subject area teachers. Our goal is to engage our scholars' creativity and their talent, to help them see their own potential and to identify skill deficits and areas in which they need improvement. We help them set concrete goals, and then make progress in their behavior, their skills, and their plans for the future. And most importantly, we strive to provide caring, positive feedback and guidance.

Core Curriculum

Scholars learn with their residential units in small classrooms of 10-15 scholars. Our classrooms are equipped with both a general education teacher and a special education teacher because of the great variety of age, skill, and ability levels in each classroom, and because about 50% of our students have special needs. Instructors use a variety of instruction methods, combining direct instruction with project-based, cooperative learning strategies.

All students take English, math, social studies, and science. These core curriculum classes are standards-based; aligned with the curriculum standards of the District of Columbia's Public Schools (DCPS) so that the work scholars do here will give them the skills and the credits they will need for whatever program they enter upon leaving the Maya Angelou Academy. But we have adapted the curriculum so that is culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of the scholars at the Maya Angelou Academy.

The curricula and schedules for all classes and activities are organized into eight modular 4-week units which take about one month to complete. This structure enables students on different residency schedules to complete whole units of study before leaving. More importantly, the units have themes which inspire a school-wide, cross-curricular focus on some of the larger issues which drive our teaching: ***Relationships, Change, Choice, Power, Justice, Freedom, Dreams, Ethics, and Systems***. These themes help support the core curriculum material with the principles of empowerment and social action.

Additionally, we offer GED preparation classes to those students who wish to enroll and who are at least 17 and have passed the qualifying examination.